

Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIEP-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 EB-12 FRB-03 TRSE-00 /121 W

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R 041547Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4493

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UK

SUBJECT: GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN: THE SECOND WEEK

SUMMARY: SECOND WEEK OF CAMPAIGN GENERATED MORE HEAT BUT, IF ANYTHING, EVEN LESS LIGHT AND VOTER ENTHUSIASM THAN FIRST WEEK. CONSERVATIVES, WHO EXPERIENCED CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTY GETTING OUT OF STARTING BLOCKS, GAINED MOMENTUM AND FORCED LABOR TO COUNTER THEIR ATTACKS AND INITIATIVES. NEVERTHELESS, LABOR CONTINUED TO HAVE CAMPAIGN EDGE AND PARTY LEADERS BEGAN TO EXPRESS PRIVATELY SOME CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE COMPLACENCY AMONG THEIR SUPPORT-

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ERS. THE LIBERALS, WHO WOULD BE DELIGHTED WITH SUCH

PROBLEMS, APPEARED TO BE GAINING LITTLE GROUND. LABOR BELIEVES THREAT POSED BY SCOTTISH NATIONALIST PARTY (SNP) MAY BE LESS THAN ORIGINALLY FEARED. ODDS CONTINUE TO FAVOR OVERALL MAJORITY FOR LABOR IN NEXT PARLIAMENT. END SUMMARY

1. DESPITE UNANIMOUS VIEW AMONG CONTENDING PARTIES THAT BRITAIN FACES GRAVE ECONOMIC CRISIS AND THEIR EFFORTS TO DRIVE THIS POINT HOME, ELECTORATE SEEMED STRANGELY LETHARGIC AS CAMPAIGN MOVED THROUGH SECOND WEEK. A GUARDIAN COLUMNIST WAS MOVED TO WRITE "IN THE FIRST WEEK OF THE CAMPAIGN THE PRESS WAS TRIVIALISING IT, BUT NOW THE POLITICIANS ARE." NEVERTHELESS, AT LEAST ONE OPINION POLL (ORC) INDICATED PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO DEFINITELY PLAN TO VOTE IS RUNNING SLIGHTLY AHEAD OF THAT FOUND AT COMPARABLE POINT IN FEBRUARY CAMPAIGN. POLLS CONTINUE TO GIVE LABOR PARTY DECIDED LEAD OVER TORIES (5 TO 9 PERCENT), BUT THEY ALSO REVEAL THAT AT LEAST ONE VOTER IN TEN REFUSES TO EXPRESS PARTY PREFERENCE.

2. LABOR'S CAMPAIGN IS STILL UNFOLDING IN MEASURED FASHION, STRESSING ISSUES AND PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF LABOR "TEAM" HEADED BY PRIME MINISTER WILSON. SUBSTANTIVE EMPHASIS IN SECOND WEEK SHIFTED FROM SOCIAL CONTRACT, FOCUSING ON EEC REFERENDUM (LONDON 12838) AND HOUSING. ON LATTER ISSUE, LABOR SEEMED TO BE REACTING TO CONSERVATIVE INITIATIVE (LONDON 12784). THE SAME WAS TRUE ON UK DEFENSE REVIEW ISSUE (LONDON 12939). LABOR PARTY LEADERS ARE REASONABLY CONFIDENT OF VICTORY AND SOME HAVE PRIVATELY EXPRESSED THEIR CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE COMPLACENCY AT GRASS ROOTS LEVEL. ONE CABINET MEMBER EVEN TOLD EMBOFF HE WAS WORRIED THAT PARTY MIGHT GAIN SUCH LARGE MAJORITY THAT NEXT PARLIAMENT MIGHT MOVE TOO FAR TOO RAPIDLY IN IMPLEMENTING LABOR PROGRAM.

3. ALTHOUGH CONSERVATIVE CAMPAIGN EFFORT FORCED LABOR ON DEFENSIVE ON SOME ISSUES, IT STILL SEEMED TO LACK

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H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

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COHERENT STRATEGY AND THEME. IT WAS, HOWEVER, CONSIDER-
ABLY IMPROVED OVER FIRST WEEK. AS INDICATED ABOVE,
9-1/2 PERCENT MORTGAGE PROPOSAL APPEARED TO BE TORIES'
MOST EFFECTIVE ISSUE, BUT THEY FOUND LITTIE COMFORT
ELSEWHERE. AS YET THE CONSERVATIVES SEEM TO HAVE MADE
LITTLE HEADWAY IN OVERCOMING VOTER MEMORIES OF THEIR
LAST GOVERNMENT.

4. LIBERALS, WHO HAVE HOPED TO EXPLOIT MOMENTUM FROM
FEBRUARY ELECTION, DO NOT APPEAR TO BE MAKING APPRECIA-
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BLE GAINS THOUGH THEY COULD CLAIM A SIGNIFICANT PORTION
OF PRESENTLY UNDECIDED VOTE. THEIR CAMPAIGN SPOTLIGHT

THIS WEEK MOVED AWAY FROM PARTY LEADER THORPE, GIVING VOTERS OPPORTUNITY TO SEE OTHER PARTY LUMINARIES. INDEPENDENT POLLS OF SCOTTISH VOTERS ARE CONTRADICTORY ON LIKELY IMPACT OF SNP, BUT SCOTTISH LABOR PARTY OFFICIALS BELIEVE THAT SNP THREAT TO LABOR SEEMS LESS FORMIDABLE THAN THEY ONCE FEARED. WHILE SNP MAY PICK UP SOME SEATS, ITS TOTAL VOTE IS EXPECTED TO FALL SHORT OF TWOFOLD INCREASE TARGET HOPED FOR BY PARTY LEADERS. ULSTER CAMPAIGN, AS EXPECTED, CONTINUES TO HAVE ONLY MOST REMOTE RELATIONSHIP TO THAT IN REST OF UK. GIVEN CURRENT LINEUP -- 43 CANDIDATES FOR 12 SEATS (BELFAST 145) -- UNIONISTS ARE EXPECTED TO HAVE 10 SEATS IN NEXT PARLIAMENT, THOUGH NON-UNIONISTS APPEAR TO HAVE OUTSIDE CHANCE IN TWO OF THESE SEATS.

5. AT END OF SECOND WEEK, ALTHOUGH POSSIBILITY EXISTS OF LARGE LAST-MINUTE SHIFTS IN VOTER ATTITUDES, LABOR'S PROSPECTS FOR GAINING ABSOLUTE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY REMAIN GOOD.

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Message Attributes

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TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
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